

ADM

U.S. Missiles Could Destroy Cities, Russians Tell People

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Key Soviet military leaders are telling their people that despite work on a Russian missile defense, the United States can destroy many Soviet cities in a nuclear war.

This frank assessment of the dangers of a nuclear war is in accord with the frequent statements made by Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara that neither side can defend adequately against a major nuclear attack by the other.

The significance of the Russian statements has not been lost on U.S. intelligence officers, wrestling with the question of whether the Soviet Union is going ahead with fullscale deployment of its fledgling antiballistic missile (ABM) defense,

which so far is only evident around Moscow.

If the Soviet military men conclude that a full scale ABM system—whose cost can run into many billions of dollars—is impractical, the chances increase that Soviet leaders will be in no hurry to allocate the necessary resources into full deployment—and might be amenable to President Johnson's call for a freeze in strategic missiles.

As has been typical ever since the fall of Nikita S. Khrushchev—and even before his loss of power—the Soviet military men do not speak in a single, unanimous voice.

But a general line is discernible—that an ABM system is theoretically possible, but given the realities of modern warfare, cannot be counted upon to protect the cities.

Today is Soviet Armed Forces Day, which is widely celebrated inside the USSR, and the occasion of many articles and speeches commemorating the occasion.

Normally the Soviet leaders stress the bright side of their military machine, but U.S.

specialists are scanning the thousands of words put out for glimmers of information that are pertinent to the present ABM discussion.

Two high-ranking officials, Defense Minister Rodion Ya. Malinovsky and Andrei A. Grechko, first deputy defense minister, said that Soviet defense units could be sure of hitting "any enemy aircraft and many rockets."

Grechko wrote yesterday in Izvestia, the government newspaper. Malinovsky, his boss, wrote today in the Communist party newspaper Pravda.

Essentially, they were repeating a statement made last April during the 23rd Party Congress by Malinovsky, who at that time said "modern means of anti-aircraft defense of the country provide for reliable destruction of any aircraft and many rockets of the enemy."

Malinovsky's statement last April was the first public admission that the USSR could not stop a fullscale missile attack. Last month, writing in Kommunist, the bimonthly journal of the Communist party, Malinovsky

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stressed Russian offensive might, but dropped any reference to stopping rockets.

Weaknesses in the missile defense program also were emphasized by Marshal Vasily I. Chuikov, head of the Soviet civil defense, and one of the most famous Soviet leaders, the man most responsible for the victory at Stalingrad, and a former head of the ground forces.

Chuikov, noted for his frank articles and memoirs, said in a television speech, monitored by the Associated Press:

"Unfortunately there are no means yet which would guarantee complete security of our towns and most important objects from the blows of the enemy's weapons of mass destruction."

He said that "in practice it is impossible to intercept completely all modern planes, even more so rockets launched through space. A certain number of them may reach the target."

On Monday, Gen. Pavel G. Kurochkin, head of the Frunze Military Academy, the Soviet "West Point," told a news conference that "detecting missiles in time and destroying them in flight is no problem."

But this statement was viewed by U.S. officials at the time as merely a Khrushchev-type boast that missiles could hit "a fly in the sky." U.S. officials say an ABM system can operate in a controlled situation, but in actual wartime is only marginally effective.

The head of Soviet anti-aircraft defense, Gen. Pavel F. Batitsky told Tass that his troops can "reliably protect the country's territory from an enemy attack by air." He did not say anything about an attack from space, according to the Associated Press report.

Debate on Intentions

Much of the debate in Washington centers around Soviet intentions. If Moscow decides to go ahead with a fullscale ABM system, there is a strong likelihood that Congress will insist that the administration do likewise, possibly touching off another expensive arms race.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff believe the Russians are going ahead with fullscale deployment of a system, while other analysts, particularly in the Central Intelligence Agency and the State Department, are dubious about this and argue that the only certain Soviet ABM system is around Moscow—and even this is regarded as already obsolete.

These differences of opinion were cited by The Star two months ago, and in other papers yesterday. This led the Pentagon to issue a statement yesterday

afternoon that there is no disagreement about the Moscow deployment, but that there is disagreement about a "a system of some other kind" that is going up in other parts of the USSR.

The statement said that the Joint Chiefs do not believe the other system is merely an anti-aircraft defense, as do some intelligence sources. It said that McNamara "has emphasized repeatedly that in planning our own actions, we must assume that the Soviets have already started to deploy a nationwide ABM system or will do so in the future."

McNamara has said, however, that an ABM system cannot protect against a fullscale attack, and would not be worth the high costs. He seems to favor a so-called "thin system," a smallscale one that would protect some of the U.S. missile sites, or some cities against attack from China—but even this kind of system is years away.

U.S. officials found the statements from Moscow interesting, but say they seem to beg the question: If Soviet military men agree that an ABM doesn't work, why build one?

Soviet Premier Alexei N. Kosygin ducked a question on this subject when he was in London by saying that all nuclear weapons should be junked. This has kept alive hopes here that Moscow can be talked into some arms control of both offensive and defensive weapons.

The matter is being pursued diplomatically and was the main subject of U.S. Ambassador Llewelyn E. Thompson's first meeting with Kosygin last Saturday. It is also likely to come up in Geneva during the just-reconvened disarmament conference.